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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001015

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S KURDISH DTP: HAWKS 1, DOVES 0

REF: ANKARA 964

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) The Democratic Society Party's (DTP) July convention is likely to be a turning point for the pro-Kurdish party, following a tumultuous period that saw the ouster of party moderates in favor of hard-line leadership. DTP Parliamentary Group Chairman Ahmet Turk's surprisingly frank statement, later denied, that the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) armed struggle is harming the Kurdish cause (reftel) laid bare the divide and led to Turk's May 27 resignation from his post. The party's new, hard-line acting chairman, Emine Ayna, was elected to replace Turk as parliamentary group head. Turk denied problems within the DTP and underscored DTPers' solidarity and commonality of mission. He left open the possibility of contesting Ayna for party chairmanship at the July 20 congress.

¶2. (C) The tug of war between DTP hawks and the doves has been building. In November 2007, Turk and his colleague Aysel Tugluk, both considered moderates, were forced out of party leadership to make room for Emine Ayna and Nurettin Demirtas. Over the last several months, tensions have been particularly visible on Tuesdays, when Turk's party group meetings were upstaged by Ayna's press conferences. After Demirtas was arrested for evading military service and sent in April to the army, the party's executive board elected Ayna, not Turk, acting chairman. According to Taraf daily on May 26, Ayna and acting vice chairman Mustafa Sarikaya visited Turk and those close to him (including Sirri Sakik, Nuri Yaman, and Akin Birdal) to ask Turk not to resign as parliamentary group chairman, a position often held by the party chairman. They in turn asked Ayna to not run for party chairman at the convention and to issue more moderate messages.

¶3. (C) COMMENT. Increased assertiveness of the hard-line faction may be due to a number of factors, amplified by the progressing closure case against the party. Turkey's relations with Northern Iraq have improved significantly, as they have with Baghdad, leaving the PKK less room to maneuver. The Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP), receiving renewed attention from a government vowing to see the decades-long project through to completion within five years, is not welcomed by the Kurdish hard-liners, though the government continues to largely ignore calls for cultural and linguistic recognition. Turk's risky criticism of the PKK, which he was compelled to publicly deny but reportedly defended in DTP's executive board meeting, drew attention to

the divisions within the party between the old generation and the younger, more radicalized one. The party convention represents a critical juncture: DTP members must determine whether they prefer the modicum of legitimacy gained by being in parliament and are willing to risk PKK retaliation, or further isolate themselves as the political voice of the terrorist PKK. Ultimately, they will ask themselves, what have they gained so far? End comment.

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